

STATINTL

Dominican Role of U.S. Is Assailed

Fulbright Criticism Rekindles Dispute Over Intervention

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Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) yesterday attacked the United States intervention in the Dominican Republic as a "grievous mistake" characterized "initially by over-timidity and subsequently by over-reaction."

Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, charged that the U.S. action was the result of "faulty advice given to the President by his representatives in the Dominican Republic at the time of acute crisis."

Speaking for more than an hour on the Senate floor, Fulbright delivered the most far-reaching and scathing criticism of the Dominican intervention that has been uttered by a U.S. official to date. Because of his prestige and influence, the speech is certain to rekindle the controversy that broke out last April when President Johnson ordered some 24,000 U.S. troops into the midst of the Dominican revolution.

Parallel Drawn

Fulbright drew a parallel between the Dominican intervention and the U.S. commitment to Viet-Nam, saying:

"We are currently fighting a war in Viet-Nam, largely, we are told, because it would be a disaster if the United States failed to honor its word and its commitment. I do not see why it is any less a matter of vital interest to honor a clear and explicit treaty obligation in the Americas."

He was referring to the Organization of American States Charter, which explicitly forbids OAS members to intervene in the internal affairs of any American republic.

Pointing to Latin American fears that the United States is obsessed with fear of communism, he cited the Defense Department's preoccupation with counterinsurgency projects such as the controversial Project Camelot. These studies, Fulbright said, "claim to be scientific but beneath their almost unbelievably opaque language lies an unmistakable military and reactionary bias."

Testimony Taken

Fulbright said he had reached his conclusions about the Dominican situation after listening to the testimony taken by the Foreign Relations Committee in a series of closed hearings during July.

Charging the Administration with "a lack of candor," the Senator said, "The danger to American lives was more the pretext than a reason for the massive U.S. intervention."

The real reason, he asserted, was the Administration's fear of a Communist takeover—a fear based on "exaggerated estimates of Communist influence in the rebel movement."

These "exaggerated estimates," Fulbright said, were the fault of W. Tapley Bennett, U.S. Ambassador in

Santo Domingo, and other U.S. officials on the scene. He charged that during the early days of the revolution last April, they sent Washington reports based on misjudgment of the facts, inadequate evidence and false information.

"It is not at all difficult to understand why, on the basis of such faulty advice, the President made the decisions that he made," Fulbright said.

Because of this, he charged, the United States lost the opportunity to channel the course of the revolution toward an immediate restoration of Dominican democracy. As a result, he said, the United States both alienated mass opinion in Latin America and placed itself in the position of abetting right-wing, militaristic forces in the Dominican Republic.

"It cannot be said with assurance that the United States could have changed the course of events by acting differently," he asserted. "What can be said with assurance is that the United States did not take advantage of several opportunities in which it might have changed the course of events."

"The reason appears to be that, very close to the beginning of the revolution, U.S. policy makers decided that it should not be allowed to succeed. This decision seems to me to have been based on exaggerated estimates of Communist influence in the rebel movement and on distaste for the return to power of Juan Bosch (former Dominican president) or a government controlled by Bosch's party, the PRD (Dominican Revolutionary Party)."

This hostility toward the rebels, he said, seemed based partly on the official U.S. view that Bosch had been an incompetent president before he was deposed by a military coup in 1963. Even more, he added, U.S. diplomats and officials appeared to be motivated by fears that they might be held responsible for "another Cuba" in Santo Domingo.

In summarizing his views on what happened in Washington and Santo Domingo during late April and early May, the Senator made seven specific points.

(1) The United States intervened "not to save American lives, as was then contended, but to prevent the victory of a revolutionary movement which was judged to be Communist-dominated."

(2) Although there is no doubt that Communists joined the Dominican rebels, the evidence offered the Foreign Relations Committee by the Administration does not support "the assertion that the rebels were Communist-dominated or certain to become so . . ."

(3) "The United States let pass its best opportunities to influence the course of events." These occurred on April 25, when the PRD requested a United States presence, and on April 27, when the rebels, believing themselves defeated, requested U.S. mediation for a negotiated settlement.

Fulbright said the first re-

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quest apparently was rejected because of Johnson Administration hostility toward Bosch and the PRD and the second because "Ambassador Bennett and the U.S. Government anticipated and desired a victory of the anti-rebel forces."

(4) U.S. policy toward the Dominican Republic shifted markedly to the right between September, 1963 (the date of Bosch's ouster) and April, 1965. "Thus the United States turned its back on social revolution in Santo Domingo and associated itself with a corrupt and reactionary military oligarchy."

(5) "U.S. policy was marred by a lack of candor and by misinformation." In this respect, Fulbright recalled that Mr. Johnson asserted on June 17 that "some 1500 innocent people were murdered and shot, and their heads cut off." There is, Fulbright said, no evidence to support this statement.

(6) "Responsibility for the failure of American policy lies primarily with those who advised the President"—who in the critical early days sent reports exaggerating the Communist danger and who then recommended military intervention.

(7) The fear of "another Cuba" in the Caribbean and its possible effects on the careers of those who might be held responsible" seems to have been "the most important single factor in distorting the judgment of otherwise sensible and competent men."

After he finished speaking,

Fulbright was challenged sharply by the Assistant Democratic Leader, Sen. Russell B. Long of Louisiana, and by Sen. George A. Smathers (D-Fla.).

Long disputed Fulbright's contention that the United States will jeopardize its standing in Latin America if it opposes any radical reform movement because it might have Communist support. So long as there is a hint or a possible Communist takeover, Long asserted, the United States must move against it.

Smathers agreed, saying: "What's wrong with trying to save a country from communism? What we ought to be

doing is applauding the President as, thank God, 85 percent of the American people have done."

At the White House, Presidential Press Secretary Bill D. Moyers said he had talked to a number of officials "who simply do not believe that the Senator's views are justified." Fulbright, Moyers added, seemed to be expressing his personal opinions and was not speaking for the Foreign Relations Committee.

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